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MORE THAN A GOOD IDEA:
Moving from Words to Action in Social Studies

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Simon Fraser University

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Wanda Cassidy and Carl J. Bognar,
Simon Fraser University,
December, 1990

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INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the findings from the 1989 British Columbia Assessment of Social Studies. More detailed findings are presented in the technical report (Bognar, Cassidy, Manley-Casimir, and Lewis, 1991).

The title for this report, **More than a Good Idea: Moving from Words to Action in Social Studies**, reflects the findings of the study. We believe that the extensive revision of the curriculum undertaken since the last social studies assessment (Aoki, Langford, Williams and Wilson, 1977) resulted in a relatively progressive and challenging curriculum. While a few modifications are in order, and are proposed in this document, the spirit and intent of the curriculum generally have the support of educators in the province.

The ideas of the current curriculum, however, have been neither as effectively nor as widely implemented as intended. Teachers are unsure about what is meant by "critical thinking." The resources they use in the classroom and the in-service sessions that are available are inadequate. The innovative strategies recommended in the curriculum are practised in only a few social studies classrooms. Attitudes are relegated to third-place status, behind content and skills. Students do not see the need to apply their beliefs to the real world. The words of the curriculum have, by and large, not been translated into action.

We hope that this report stimulates debate about the state of social studies and provides the catalyst for more effective implementation of the social studies curriculum.

PART 1: OVERVIEW

In May 1989, the social studies achievement and attitudes of British Columbia students in Grades 4, 7, and 10 were assessed as part of the Provincial Learning Assessment Program. Social studies was last assessed in 1977. The 1989 Social Studies Assessment marked the first time that French Immersion and Programme-cadre de français students were assessed in French, the language of their instruction. The content of the assessment is based on the goals and objectives of the K - 11 curriculum as outlined in the curriculum guides.

Goals of the Social Studies Curriculum

The intent of the social studies curriculum in British Columbia is expressed in two guides, one for the elementary level (Grades 1 to 7), published in 1983, and one for the secondary schools (Grades 8 to 11), published in 1985.

Four goals articulate the intent of the social studies program across all grades, 1 through 11.

Goal 1: Students should know and understand the factors which have shaped and continue to shape Canada and Canadians.

More specifically, by the end of the required program and through the exercise of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, students will be expected to know and understand the following:

- how Canadians have interacted with, and continue to interact with, their physical environment.
- how Canada's social and cultural diversity has developed and continues to develop.
- how Canada's economy has developed and continues to develop.
- how Canada's political process has developed and continues to develop.
- how Canada's relations with the rest of the world have affected, and continue to affect, Canada's development.

Goal 2: Students should know about and understand the diverse patterns of human activity in the world.

More specifically, by the end of the required curriculum and through the exercise of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, students will be expected to know about and understand the following:

- the world's physical environment and how the peoples of the world interact with their physical environment.
- the social and cultural diversity of the peoples of the world and the factors that contribute to this diversity.
- the basic characteristics of the world's economies and the factors that contribute to their diversity.
- the basic characteristics of the diverse political processes of the world and the factors that contribute to their diversity.
- the development of nation states and their interactions.
- current events in the world and contemporary world issues.

Goal 3: Students should know and understand the roles, rights, and responsibilities of an individual as a member of society.

More specifically, by the end of the required curriculum and through the exercise of critical-thinking and problem solving skills, students will be expected to know about and understand the following:

- informal and formal social interactions within the society and their influence upon individuals and groups.
- the effect of the economy upon Canadians.
- the different levels of Canadian government and how they function.
- the different types of government in the world, and the relationship between governments and individuals throughout the world.
- the media's influence upon individuals and society.
- the legal system of Canada and its effect upon individuals and groups.

Goal 4: Students should develop a willingness and ability to use knowledge and understanding as members of society.

More specifically, by the end of the required curriculum and through the exercise of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, students will be able to do the following:

- communicate their ideas to others in a variety of situations and forms.
- participate to the level of their maturity in their society.
- tolerate differing views.
- examine a variety of viewpoints, particularly with respect to issues and problems.
- analyze and react meaningfully to the constant change in society.
- reach a conclusion on the basis of the best available evidence.

Highlights

- Interpretation Panels rated results for all three cognitive levels (Knowledge, Understanding and Application, and Higher Order and Critical Thinking) and for the three curriculum goals, assessed through the achievement survey as Satisfactory or Very Satisfactory at all three grades.

- Students' attitudes towards equal rights tend to become more positive as they progress through the grades; however, acceptance of the equal rights of immigrants decreases.

- Student tolerance towards differences and willingness to participate in society are generally positive, although males tend to hold slightly less positive attitudes than females, particularly at the secondary level. Least tolerant attitudes were noted towards immigrants.

- Teachers believe that greater attention needs to be given to attitude development in both the curriculum and the classroom.

- While discussion of political and international issues increases through the grades, this is not accompanied by increased discussion of each person's role in helping to make Canada and the world a better place.

- Participation in citizenship activities declines at the secondary level. Students are more likely to hold positive beliefs about rights and responsibilities than to translate these beliefs into action.

- Students do not equate enjoyable learning activities with easy activities.

- The Interpretation Panels rated achievement for French Immersion students the same as that for regular program students in all domains at all three grades.

- Differences between French Immersion students and regular program students are greatest at Grade 4, and diminish thereafter.

- Teachers generally rely on traditional teaching strategies in their social studies classrooms, although teachers at the earlier grades are more willing to use more innovative methods.

- Many teachers do not use classroom strategies to foster the development of critical thinking, particularly at the secondary level.

- Teachers at the upper grades rely on a narrower repertoire of evaluation measures; the measure used most often is the teacher-made test.

- Teachers believe that the scope of the curriculum is too broad for the time allocated to teach social studies.

- The Interpretation Panels and the teachers surveyed made a number of suggestions about the content of the curriculum. Panel members and teachers at all three grades would like to see an increased emphasis on current events, global awareness, and environmental issues. Grade 10 panel members and teachers would also like to see more emphasis on geography and geographic skills.

- Teachers at all three grades support the emphasis on problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, and inquiry processes in the curriculum.

- Many teachers have not attended any in-service program on the current social studies curriculum, and most do not belong to the Provincial Social Studies Teachers' Association.

- Teachers want and require more support (in the form of resources and in-service programs) for implementing the critical-thinking aspects of the curriculum.

- Textbooks require further development, and additional classroom resources need to be provided, especially in French.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the assessment, and on the comments and recommendations made by the Interpretation Panels, the Contract Team makes the following recommendations:

1. Classroom Practice

   - ✓ In order to establish greater congruence between the formal and informal curriculum, students should be involved in activities which model curriculum content, such as cooperative learning and democratic decision-making.

   - ✓ Students should be involved in activities which deal directly with the attitudinal components of the social studies curriculum. It is particularly important that students at the secondary level address the issue of tolerance.

   - ✓ Students should participate in school and community projects which allow them to learn from the community, and then to apply the knowledge they learn to the real world.

2. Critical Thinking

   - ✓ The social studies curriculum guide should clearly articulate what is meant by critical thinking, and its relative importance within the curriculum. Furthermore, the guide should clearly distinguish the meanings and associated skills of critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving.

   - ✓ Strategies for addressing critical thinking in the classroom should be included in a revised curriculum guide for social studies. This initiative would provide teachers with models for implementing these approaches in their classrooms.

- ✓ A provincial committee should be established to investigate structural and organizational impediments in secondary schools that inhibit the effective implementation of critical-thinking approaches, and to make recommendations for change. This need is particularly urgent in the context of the impending curriculum reorganization in the province.

3. Curriculum: Content

- ✓ There should be a greater integration of the various disciplines of social studies (particularly history, geography, law, and economics).

- ✓ There should be a reduction in the amount of content to be covered at the secondary level, in favour of greater stress on the development of higher-level cognitive processes and attitudes. The content that is addressed should be treated in depth, rather than treating many topics superficially.

- ✓ "Current Events" should be included as a core element of the curriculum, rather than as an extension or optional activity.

- ✓ Global awareness should receive greater attention at all grades.

- ✓ There should be increased emphasis on environmental issues at all grades.

- ✓ Racial and ethnic tolerance should be specifically addressed in the formal curriculum.

- ✓ Activities that involve students in interaction in the community should be included in the repertoire of teachers' strategies for meeting the goals of the curriculum.

4. Curriculum: Guidelines and Resources

   - ✓ A new curriculum guide for social studies should be developed.
   - ✓ The new curriculum guide should encompass all programs (Primary, Intermediate, and Graduate) to provide teachers at all levels with an understanding of the intent, continuity, and strategies of the entire curriculum.
   - ✓ The new curriculum guide should combine both curriculum guides and resource manuals into one comprehensive and logical document to assist teachers in understanding the practical application of the ideas outlined in the guide.
   - ✓ The new curriculum guide should clearly integrate skills, attitudes, and content in each grade, and there should be a balance among these three areas.
   - ✓ Textbooks need improving, particularly at the secondary level, and other teacher and classroom resources need to be provided, especially in French.

5. Implementation and In-service

   - ✓ Implementation of the social studies curriculum should become a priority. A committee should be struck to develop a long-term, province-wide plan for implementing the social studies curriculum.
   - ✓ Teachers need in-service education about strategies for enhancing critical thinking and inquiry learning in their classrooms.
   - ✓ Teachers need in-service education about effective ways to address the attitudinal dimensions of the social studies curriculum.
   - ✓ Teachers need in-service education about alternate methods of evaluating student progress.

- ✓ A concerted effort must be made to ensure that more innovative classroom strategies are employed by social studies teachers at all grades. This task requires the involvement of every level of the educational system: classroom teachers, school district staff, the B.C. Teachers' Federation and the B.C. Social Studies Teachers Association, faculties of education, the B.C. School Trustees Association, and the Ministry of Education.

- ✓ Ministry of Education and school districts should promote the multicultural, attitudinal, and participatory dimensions of the social studies curriculum.

- ✓ The British Columbia Social Studies Teachers Association should make a concerted effort to attract new members and to enhance activities which focus on the needs of primary and intermediate teachers.

6. Teacher Education and Certification

   - ✓ Greater emphasis should be placed on the preparation of elementary teachers to teach social studies.

   - ✓ The Ministry of Education and teacher education institutions should encourage the development of methods courses that integrate the disciplines comprising social studies.

   - ✓ Since the social studies curriculum is intended to be interdisciplinary, requirements for certification at both the elementary and secondary levels should be expanded beyond history or geography to include other relevant disciplines, for example, political science, economics, law, and sociology.

   - ✓ A program of continuing education should be designed that enhances teachers' knowledge and skills in social studies pedagogy, and increases their familiarity with current social studies research.

PART 2: ACHIEVEMENT IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Tables of Specifications

To translate the intent of the curriculum (as expressed in the curriculum goals) into assessment instruments, the Contract Team developed a Table of Specifications for each of the three grades (4, 7, and 10). (Details about how the Tables of Specifications were designed are in the Appendix.) The Grade 4 Table of Specifications reflects curricular content from Grades 1 to 4; the Grade 7 from 5 to 7, and the Grade 10 from 8 to 10. These Tables, presented in Figure 1, represent the "blueprint" for the multiple-choice questions developed for the achievement surveys.

Both cognitive processes and three of the four major goals have been integrated into the Tables of Specifications. The numbers on the tables indicate the approximate proportion of that type of item in the achievement surveys at each grade. For example, approximately 51% of the questions on the achievement surveys for all three grades were items intended to measure critical thinking.

The cognitive levels, presented across the top of the tables, are based on the taxonomy developed by Benjamin Bloom (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl, 1956). The first level, "Knowledge," assesses recall of factual information. The second level, "Understanding and Application," represents a higher level of thinking, involving comprehension of new information, and the ability to use abstractions, rules, and principles. The highest level, "Higher Order and Critical Thinking," includes Bloom's three upper levels of cognition, that is, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. (A position paper on the definition of critical thinking is presented in Bognar et al., 1991.)

Attitudinal outcomes specified in Goal 4 are not included in the Tables of Specifications; rather, these outcomes were assessed through attitude scales developed by the Contract Team. These attitude scales are discussed later in this report.

Some cognitive processes in problem-solving and decision-making that could not be assessed using multiple-choice items were addressed in a series of open-ended activities. These activities were presented to a sample of students in a booklet referred to as "the written-response booklet."

Figure 1

TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS

Percent of items for Grade 4

	RECALL (KNOWLEDGE)	UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION	HIGHER ORDER AND CRITICAL THINKING
1. CANADA: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE	6	17	24
2. THE WORLD: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE	1	2	3
3. THE INDIVIDUAL'S ROLE IN SOCIETY	6	17	24
TOTALS	13%	36%	51%

TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS

Percent of items for Grades 7 and 10

	RECALL (KNOWLEDGE)	UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION	HIGHER ORDER AND CRITICAL THINKING
1. CANADA: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE	4	12	17
2. THE WORLD: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE	4	12	17
3. THE INDIVIDUAL'S ROLE IN SOCIETY	4	12	17
TOTALS	12%	36%	51%

approximately 33% for each goal

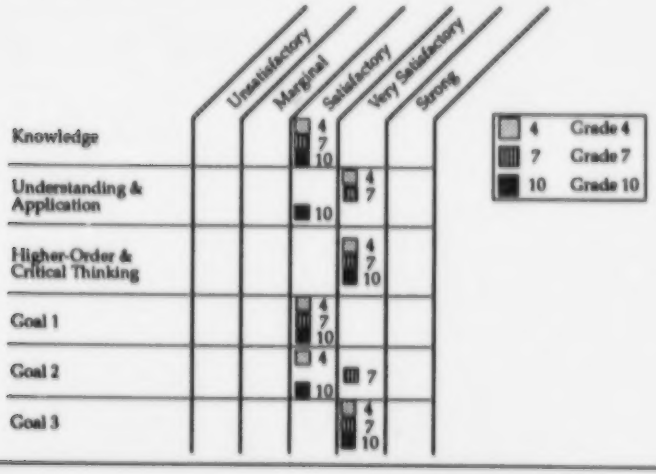
Sample Achievement Instruments

Two types of instruments, multiple-choice questions and written-response activities, were designed to assess the extent to which expected achievement is being met in each of the three grades. The written-response activities were designed to assess some aspects of problem-solving and decision-making processes that could not be adequately assessed using multiple-choice questions. Note that the content of each instrument is based on curricular content from preceding grades, as well as that of the grade being assessed.

Overall Results

Figure 2, below, reflects the level of satisfaction of the Interpretation Panel for each grade with the provincial results at that grade. Panel members were asked to rate domain results using a five point scale: Unsatisfactory, Marginal, Satisfactory, Very Satisfactory, or Strong (U, M, S, VS, or ST). Regular program results and French Immersion program results were rated identically for all domains at all three grades.

Figure 2
INTERPRETATION PANEL SUMMARY RATINGS BY DOMAIN



French Immersion Results

Achievement levels for French Immersion students were about 9% lower at Grade 4, 7% lower at Grade 7, and less than 1% lower at Grade 10. Therefore, differences between regular program students and French Immersion students tend to lessen over the years, and by Grade 10 the difference is negligible. In addition, the pattern of relationships among domains was identical for regular program students and French Immersion students in all three grades. Interpretation Panels concluded that the areas of strength and weakness identified for French Immersion and Programme-cadre de français students were the same as for students in regular programs.

Interpretation Panel comments and domain ratings at all three grades were formulated jointly by French Immersion teachers, Programme-cadre de français teachers, and teachers in regular programs.

Grade Four Multiple-Choice Results

The Grade 4 Interpretation Panel concluded that results on Knowledge questions were Satisfactory, as were results for Goal 1 (Canada) and Goal 2 (The World). (It should be noted that there were only a few questions on Goal 2, a minor component of the curriculum in Grades 1 through 4.)

Results in Understanding and Application, as well as in Higher Order and Critical Thinking, and in Goal 3 (The Individual's Role in Society) were rated as Very Satisfactory.

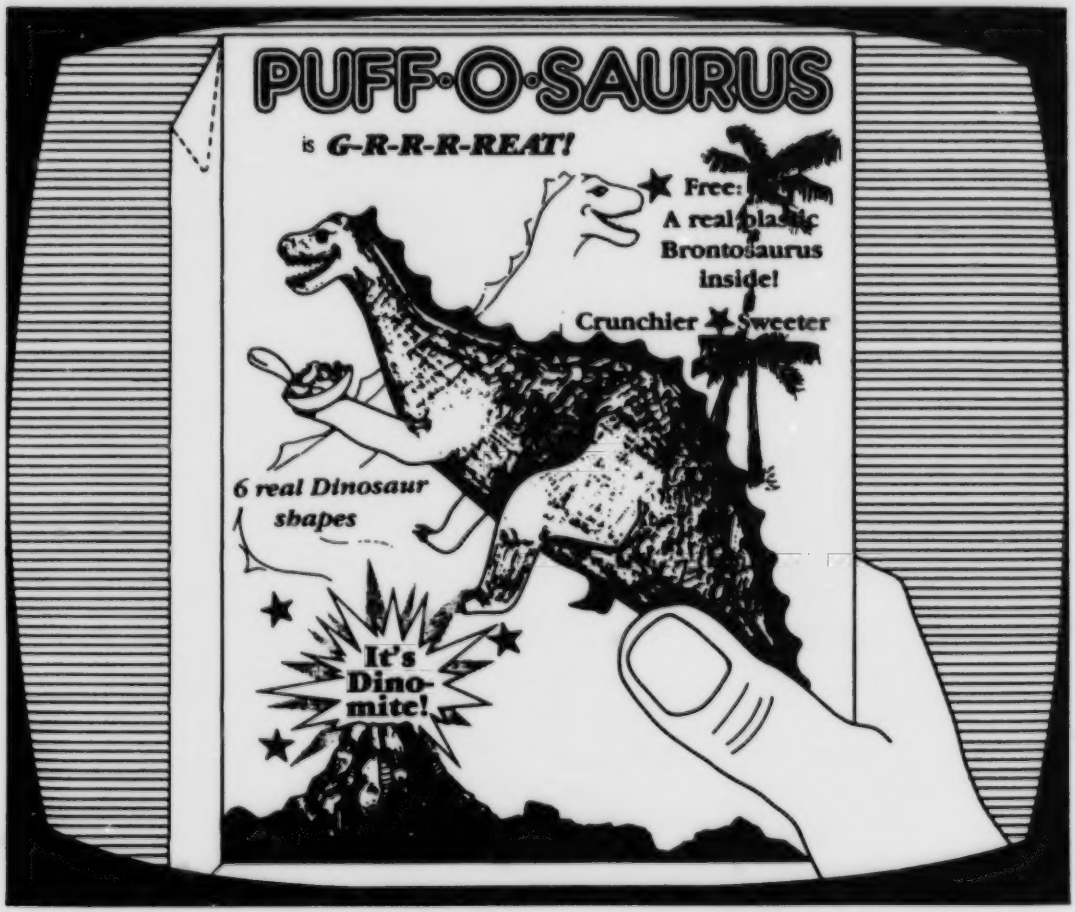
As a general conclusion, Grade 4 Panel members expressed support for the focus on critical thinking in the curriculum. Philosophically, there was a general commitment to the idea that critical thinking and the process elements of the curriculum are more important than the acquisition and recall of discrete facts. Although many Panel members expressed disappointment at the level of achievement on Knowledge questions, there was agreement that recall and memory work is not as important to students' education as is the development of higher-order and critical thinking. Panel members agreed, however, that students need to have a core of knowledge to assist them in problem-solving and decision-making. Grade 4 Interpretation Panel members stated that they would also like to see a greater emphasis on problem-solving in the curriculum.

Grade 4 Interpretation Panel members recommended that current events (both national and global) should receive more emphasis than at present, and should be formally integrated into the elementary curriculum.

Sample Achievement Survey Items - Grade 4 - Figure 3

Puff-O-Saurus

Study the T.V. screen; then choose the BEST answer for questions 4 to 8.



4. John saw this commercial while he was watching his favourite cartoon show. The company chose this commercial to show during cartoon time because they thought that

   A. children would learn about dinosaurs.
   B. people would be hungry.
   C. children would be watching.
   D. families would be together for dinner.

5. This commercial tells us that children will like this cereal because

   A. dinosaur shapes make eating cereal fun.
   B. it is in one of the four food groups.
   C. we will learn about volcanoes.
   D. dinosaurs died out many years ago.

6. This commercial tells us about Puff-O-Saurus. What **fact** do we learn about Puff-o-saurus from this commercial? Puff-O-Saurus is

   A. sweet.
   B. fun.
   C. healthy.
   D. good for your teeth.

7. Which statement about Puff-o-saurus is **not** a fact?

   A. Puff-O-Saurus is shaped like dinosaurs.
   B. Puff-O-Saurus is sweet.
   C. Puff-O-Saurus is fun to eat.
   D. Puff-O-Saurus comes with a toy brontosaurus.

8. John is at the grocery store with his dad. John says, "Look Dad! There is Puff-O-Saurus. Let's get some." "Why should we buy that cereal?" asks Dad. John answers, "Because I love dinosaurs and Puff-O-Saurus is GREAT!" John has never tasted this cereal before. Why does he think it is great?

   A. Because he wants to learn about dinosaurs.
   B. Because it is very healthy.
   C. Because there is a free toy brontosaurus in every box.
   D. Because he likes coloured cereals.

Grade 4 Performance Descriptors

Figure 4
Global Descriptions of Achievement for Grade 4 Students

Percentage Distribution of Students by Levels				
Level	1	2	3	4
Percent	16	33	39	12

Level 1 These students demonstrate a knowledge of the term "Potlatch." They are able to derive meaning from visual data.

Level 2 In addition to the above, these students have a knowledge of environmental issues, natural resources, community changes, and The Gold Rush of 1898. They are able to select information from bar graphs, maps, timelines, and pictures. They can solve problems based on experience and select from clearly stated alternatives.

Level 3 In addition to the above, these students recognize Canada, the prairie provinces, and Victoria on a map. They are able to differentiate between fiction and non-fiction, and apply information from a timeline. They have some understanding of the Olympic games and early Native cultures. They can identify a cause and effect relationship in familiar situations. They can identify a problem and predict outcomes to make a decision.

Level 4 In addition to the above, these students have an understanding of the interdependence between early explorers and native people. They are able to apply information from map symbols. They are able to extrapolate data from bar graphs and timelines to solve problems. They can distinguish between fact and opinion. They show understanding of the effects of change on the environment. They can interpret cause-and-effect relationships. They can read complex material, analyze relevant information, consider alternatives, and weigh consequences to reach a decision. These students recognize the rights of individuals and the need for cooperation in resolving conflict.

Changes in Grade 4 Achievement: 1977 - 1989

In order to assess whether there had been any significant changes in achievement since the previous social studies assessment, some questions from the 1977 assessment were repeated in 1989. Because the curriculum was revised substantially after the 1977 assessment, only a small number of questions seemed appropriate for inclusion. Seven questions from the previous assessment were selected; these were all Knowledge questions relating to government and law.

The change in performance on these seven items in Grade 4 suggests that there has been a modest decrease in knowledge about law and government since the last assessment. On average about 1% fewer students could answer these questions in 1989 than in 1977.

Excerpt from the "written-response booklet" - Figure 5

DAYTONVILLE

Study the drawing and read the paragraph. Then answer the questions that follow.

Daytonville is a small farming community built in a valley. When a new mine opened nearby many new people moved into the community. Builders wanted to buy some of the farmland near the town centre to build homes for the new families. However, some people in the community felt that the new houses should be built on the hillside near the mine and that the farmland should not be used.

The mayor of Daytonville realized this was an important concern and asked members of the community to send her letters telling her what they thought should happen.

The mayor received many letters. These four letters were typical of the different views of people in the community. Read the letters.

Dear Mayor:

I think the houses should be built near the town centre rather than on the hillside. Houses are much easier to build on flat farmland than on the hillside, which is rough, full of trees, and hard to get to. We already have roads in the valley to bring in building supplies. Schools and parks are close by. Building houses on the hillside would be too costly.

Sincerely,

A Builder

Dear Mayor:

You must allow the farmland to be turned into housing. Once this happens more businesses will open in our community. These new businesses will provide more services for our townspeople. Townspeople will not need to travel as often to the city to get the special things they need. More businesses also means more tax dollars. We could raise enough tax money to build a library or add on to our community centre. We may even become big enough to have our own hospital.

Sincerely,

A Merchant

Dear Mayor:

I don't think the farmland surrounding the town should be turned into places for new houses. There is very little farmland in the valley and we need it to grow hay for the ranchers and to grow vegetables for the townspeople. If these products have to be shipped in it will cost everyone more money. Our family also likes the town the way it is. Everyone knows each other and there is very little traffic. We even leave our doors unlocked.

Sincerely,

A Farmer

Dear Mayor:

Although I welcome new people to our valley, I think new homes should be built on the hillside. Our community has been like this for many years and has a long history. Some of our buildings are over 70 years old. People are happy here. I'm afraid we will grow so fast that we will change the character of the community. The quiet, sleepy atmosphere will disappear as the old buildings are torn down and new ones take their place.

Sincerely,

A Historian

Imagine that **YOU** are the mayor of Daytonville. You care about what the people in the community think about where to build the houses. Of the people who have written to you, name one person who is in favour of building the houses on the **hillside**, and state why.

_____ is in favour of building the houses on the **hillside** because

_____

_____

Of the people who have written you, name **one** person who is in favour of building the houses on the **farmland**, and state why.

_____ is in favour of building the houses on the **farmland** because

_____

_____

As mayor, you have thought about many possible results (good and bad) of building the houses on the hillside and on the farmland. Write down some of these results.

If the houses are built on the hillside

Good Results	Bad Results

If the houses are built on the farmland

Good Results	Bad Results

As the mayor, you now must make a decision based on all the views you have heard and thought about. You, the mayor, have decided to write a short letter to the newspaper explaining your decision.

Refer to your notes on pages 7 and 8. Then write a letter stating your decision where the homes will be built. Be sure to explain **why** you made this decision. You do not need to write more than two paragraphs. (Plan and draft a rough copy of your letter on the next page; then write the final copy on this page.)

Dear Citizens:

Results for written-response booklet

The written-response booklets (Form Q) were designed to measure some aspects of the decision-making process as outlined in the curriculum guide. The steps of the decision-making model are as follows:

1. identify the problem or issue;
2. identify possible alternative solutions;
3. gather, analyze, and interpret information regarding the alternatives;
4. evaluate the alternatives and establish priorities;
5. test the priorities and analyze the consequences of each;
6. plan a course of action;
7. make a decision;
8. take action on the decision; and
9. evaluate the decision.

Not every step of the process was assessed in each of the three grades due to time and procedural constraints. The Grade 4 written-response booklet presented students with questions representing steps 1 and 3 through 7 of this process.

About two-thirds of Grade 4 students were successful in identifying, analyzing, and interpreting the key information in a series of letters; these activities represent steps 1 and 3 of the decision-making model. Students performed less well in analyzing the consequences or implications of two possible alternatives (steps 4 and 5) than they performed in other steps of the decision-making process.

As the final activity in the written-response booklets, students were asked to make a decision, then to write a letter explaining and justifying their point of view. The scales for the letter are presented in Figure 6. A sample letter at each scale point is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 6
Grades 4 and 7 - Scales for Letter-Writing Activity

Percentage Distribution of Students by Scale points					
Scale point	0	1	2	3	4
Percent	2	12	43	30	7

Basis of the scale
- originality
- sense of decision-making - logic
- number of reasons
- elaboration of reasons

Note: Accept creative decisions IF they solve the problem

Percentage of students not responding: 6

Scale point 0
- no decision at all OR completely illegible or incomprehensible

Scale point 1
- reaches a decision but does not support it OR reaches a decision which is illogical

Scale point 2
- reaches a decision
- decision supported by one or more reasons repeated directly from the text, but not developed
- may or may not recognize stakeholders
- circular reasoning ("houses should be built in the town because it's a town")

Scale point 3
- reaches a decision
- gives one or two reasons and supports, or develops one or two reasons
- states an argument
- may recognize the importance of stakeholders

Scale point 4
- reaches a decision - evidence of decision-making
- gives three or more reasons and supports them
- states a clear argument AND/OR counterargument
- argument may be original (must be logical)
- shows some sophistication in argument; argument is structured
- recognizes the importance of stakeholders in the decision-making

Grade 4 Letter-Writing Activity Samples — Figure 7

Chers concitoyens :

Merci d'envoier votre opinion, et j'ai eu
une bonne idée. On peut construire aux la
coline et tout le monde peut mètre comme
$15 et tout le monde peut aider a construire.
Merci pour votre lettre et si tu n'aime pas
mon idée tu peux envoyer un notre lettre.

GRADE 4 – SCALE POINT 1

Dear Citizens:

I have decided that it would be better to
build the houses and buildings on the hillside.
It may cost more but it won't wreck the atmosphere.
Or the farmland that way it would produce
more food from the farmland.

Sincerely, the Mayor

GRADE 4 – SCALE POINT 2

Dear Citizens:

I have thaught vearrey Long and heard and have finly come to a dission. The best place for the new house is on the farm Land.

The reasion for my dision is it wood coast to much to bilud the house on the hill side. You farmeres wood still have some furme Land Left to have crops and a ranch out back with six or seven cows and or horses and the cost woodent be as much and we might have anuff money for a nefw Libraire or to add moor to our town center or the school.

sincerly the maor

GRADE 4 – SCALE POINT 3

Dear Citizens:

As the mayor, I am going to build the houses near the town Centre. I do not want to waist all that mioney on building them on the hillside. and I do not want to wreckle all the famlands Andwe also know and trust each other very well. We even leave our doors unlocked as said in a letter I recieved. And thank you for all the ideas you gave me on where to build the houses. I am sorry if you do not like where I'm going to build the houses, but I think it is the best place to build them.

Sincerly the Mayor

GRADE 4 – SCALE POINT 4

About one-third of students showed originality in their responses, recognized the importance of stakeholders in the decision-making process, and supported their decision with two or more reasons. 87% of students wrote responses which the Contract Team considered as satisfactory. Only 7% of students failed to reach a decision, and a further 6% did not complete the activity.

In summary, Grade 4 students performed quite well in the initial stages of the decision-making process, such as identifying the issue and extracting relevant information, and in the final stage, which required them to reach a conclusion supported by data. However, Grade 4 students were less able to examine alternative perspectives on the issue, and to weigh the consequences of those alternatives. This is an intermediary stage in the decision-making process. The weakness at this step suggests that teachers may ask students to reach a conclusion about an issue, but may not encourage them to examine different points of view before they reach a decision. These results suggest that, in many Grade 4 classrooms, there may be more emphasis on a final product rather than on the processes used to make decisions. An alternate interpretation of this finding is that the level of development of Grade 4 students may not be sufficient to enable them to consider different points of view. To date, however, there is no research on which to base an informed opinion about this issue.

For students who wrote the written-response booklet in French, performance was similar, but slightly less strong than the performance of students in regular (English) programs. Students in French programs also showed some weakness in predicting consequences of two alternatives. About 86% of French program students completed the activity, compared with 93% for regular program students, suggesting that the written-response booklet may have been more difficult for French program students. The Contract Team believes the results reflect a satisfactory level of performance for French program students, most of whom are writing in their second language.

Grade Seven Multiple-Choice Results

Grade 7 Interpretation Panel members rated performance in Knowledge and in Goal 1 (Canada) as Satisfactory. The remaining four domains were rated as Very Satisfactory. The decisions of the Grade 7 Interpretation Panel are very similar to those of the Grade 4 Panel. The Grade 7 panel was more satisfied than the Grade 4 panel with student performance on Goal 2 (The World); however, it should be noted that the curriculum at the intermediate level more fully addresses world issues.

Like the Grade 4 Panel, the Grade 7 panel recommends that current events receive greater prominence as a formal part of the curriculum. To support the extension of current events in the classroom, they recommend that the Ministry of Education provide funding for the purchase of newspapers for use in classrooms. To obtain maximum benefit from this new resource, the Contract Team recommends that appropriate in-service programs be designed and implemented to assist teachers in using the newspapers as part of critical-thinking activities in their classrooms (see, for example, Margolis, Shapiro, and Anderson, 1990).

The Grade 7 Panel felt that students' performance on Goal 1 (Canada) could be improved if better resource materials about Canada were available to all intermediate teachers. Grade 7 Panel members would also like additional pre-service and in-service support to enhance their knowledge about how to design activities that address higher-order and critical-thinking.

The 1977 assessment was administered to Grades 4, 8, and 12; therefore, no comparison items were available for Grade 7.

Sample Achievement Survey Items - Grade 7 - Figure 8

ROMAN CIVILIZATION

Study the carvings below; then answer questions 12 and 13.

The Greengrocer

The Blacksmith

The Cobbler

The Butcher

12. What can be understood about life in Roman times from these carvings found on Roman monuments?

    A. Families in Rome did everything for themselves.
    B. Romans probably did not live in settlements.
    C. People worked at different specialized jobs.
    D. Few goods and services were available in Roman times.

13. What could be said about the Roman culture from looking at these carvings?

    A. Clothing for men was very similar to clothing for men today.
    B. The Romans used sophisticated technology.
    C. Craftsmanship was important to the Romans.
    D. Women did many of the same jobs as men.

Grade 7 Performance Descriptors

Figure 9
Global Descriptions of Achievement for Grade 7 Students

Percentage Distribution of Students by Levels				
Level	1	2	3	4
Percent	19	32	29	20

Level 1 These students are able to locate British Columbia on a map of Canada, determine a position on a map by using grid coordinates, and use a legend to locate information.

Level 2 In addition to the above, these students can determine distance on a map by using the scale provided. They can identify the levels of government in Canada, and are aware of the role of law in society. These students recognize individual and cultural differences and needs. The ability to distinguish fact from opinion and to recognize bias and point of view is demonstrated. They show skills in identifying a problem, selecting relevant information, choosing from alternatives, and drawing conclusions.

Level 3 In addition to the above, these students have knowledge of Canadian and world geography. They can read charts and graphs, and understand scale, map symbols, and the importance of geographic location. They are able to identify the main idea in a paragraph. They have an understanding of democracy and law. These students can define problems, recognize cause and effect, and draw conclusions directly from given information.

Level 4 In addition to the above, these students have knowledge of the Canadian system of government. They understand some aspects of trade between groups. They are able to select and interpret information from a variety of sources, and can synthesize and evaluate this information in order to solve problems or make decisions.

Grade Seven Open-Ended Activity Results

Students in Grade 7 were given the same stimuli, and were asked to go through the same decision-making process as Grade 4 students, although they were asked to provide more information in their answers. Grade 7 students performed at a somewhat higher level in answering all questions than did Grade 4 students; this result is as expected, given their maturity and greater familiarity with the decision-making process in the curriculum.

The scales for the letter-writing activity were the same as those for Grade 4, and are presented in Figure 6. A sample Grade 7 letter at each scale point is presented in Figure 10.

Grade 7 Letter-Writing Activity Samples - Figure 10

Dear Citizens:

I think that the people will have to move to the hillsided looked at the results If they build there it will mean that you will have to make less tups to the city and you won't have to grow vegtible if you don't want to because you can just buy your food.

GRADE 7 – SCALE POINT 1

Dear Citizens: I have reached my decison on where the new people will live. the new people will live in the hillside because the rate of traffic will stay the same and the people will be able to keep on farming the land and growing food.

GRADE 7 – SCALE POINT 2

Chers concitoyens :

Mon décision au sujet de la construction des maisons est que les maisons devraient être bâti dans la colline.

C'est mon décision parce que je pense qu'en grandissant trop vite, notre village perdrait son caractère. Il y a peu de terres agricoles et si on bâtissait les maisons dans la vallée, il y aurai main en main de terres agricoles. D'abord si il y a peu de terres agricoles les fermiers pourrrant pas pousser des légumes pour les villageoises. Je veux juste dire que notre communauté existe depuis longtemps et a sa propre histoire mais si on construisaient des maisons ça changeraient tous.

GRADE 7 – SCALE POINT 3

Dear Citizens:

I have read your thoughts and decisions and I have thought about them as best I can. After alot of thought I have decided that the houses will be built on the hillside, simply because the advantages of building there outweigh those of building on the farmland. If we loose our farming industry we will be loosing money, a resource and jobs. This way we will have two industries which will benifit us all. I don't feel that increased business will bring profit, but instead increase competition. Two industries will bring in more money, making the library + hospital a good possibility. Lastly, I think taxes will come in no matter where the people live. They will still be using our business and our town will remain the same, only better.

Sincerly,
The Mayor

GRADE 7 – SCALE POINT 4

As can be seen in Figure 6, the criteria for evaluating the final letter included the following: originality, recognition of the importance of stakeholders in the decision-making process, and justification of decisions with two or more reasons. Whereas 29% of Grade 4 students met these criteria, nearly 37% of Grade 7 students did so. French Immersion students in Grade 7 out-performed regular program Grade 7 students in the quality of letters they wrote. 50% of the French students' letters met the criteria mentioned above.

Overall, the activity was somewhat easier for Grade 7 students than for Grade 4's. About 98% of Grade 7 students completed the activity, compared with 93% in Grade 4. In addition, 87% of Grade 7 students reached a conclusion and supported it, compared with 83% in Grade 4. Overall, these changes across the grades indicate a satisfactory level of development in decision-making processes.

Grade 10 Multiple-Choice Results

The Grade 10 Interpretation Panel rated student performance in Knowledge, Understanding and Application as Satisfactory. Similarly, the content areas Goal 1 (Canada) and Goal 2 (The World) were rated as Satisfactory. Student performance in Higher Order and Critical Thinking and in Goal 3 (The Individual's Role) was rated as Very Satisfactory.

Some members of the Panel expressed the opinion that there was not a sufficient number of items in the Knowledge domain to judge student performance adequately. However, the Contract Team and the Advisory Committee for the assessment were satisfied that the 15 items included in this domain adequately reflected the proportional emphasis in the curriculum guide. It is important to note that the term "Knowledge" means only "recall of factual information in isolation." Completion of items in the Understanding and Application domain, as well as in the Higher Order and Critical Thinking domain, also requires some factual knowledge on the part of students.

Several recommendations from the Grade 10 Interpretation Panel involved the content of the secondary social studies curriculum. Some panel members would like to see greater attention given to geography; this recommendation is supported by data obtained from the Teacher Questionnaire (discussed later in this report). In addition, some panel members would like a greater emphasis on developing skills in interpretation of graphs and other visuals. A few teachers on the panel also favour an increase in the amount of Canadian content in the secondary curriculum. The Contract Team, however, disagrees with this recommendation, since Canadian content is embedded in eight of the eleven years of the mandatory social studies curriculum. In addition, results from the Teacher Questionnaire indicate that the majority of teachers at all three grades would prefer to see an increase in topics related to global awareness. This interest in global education is becoming increasingly widespread in jurisdictions throughout the world (see, for example, Greig, Pike, and Selby, 1989).

The Interpretation Panel also had a few recommendations related to resources. It suggested that current prescribed textbooks for Grades 8 and 9 be revised to reflect the curriculum more accurately. In all of the texts, greater attention needs to be given to geography. New resources need to be developed that emphasize the critical-thinking component of the curriculum.

Sample Achievement Survey Items - Grade 10 - Figure 11

Wastes

Read the two passages; then choose the BEST answer for questions 1 to 6.

POEM

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice,
And some say it'll go in the flash
Of a big explosive device.
But, at the risk of sounding sarcastic,
I say the world will choke on plastic.

READING

Worldwide people produce about a billion tonnes of waste a year. The rate of which we do so is closely linked with Gross National Product. In many countries, waste is seen as a problem, not a resource. It is dumped rather than converted into useful products. Here are some examples of places around the world and their per person production of wastes per year:

Los Angeles	3.0 kg	Mexico City	0.4 kg
New York	1.82 kg	London	0.83 kg
Sao Paulo	0.57 kg	Ibadfan	0.46 kg

1. Which place listed has the largest production of waste products?

   A. Los Angeles.
   B. New York.
   C. Singapore.
   D. Jakarta.

2. Someone once said: "If you arrived at earth from another planet, you would easily find the most industrialized people. All you would have to look for are the most polluted places on earth!" This statement

   A. contradicts the data provided in the Reading.
   B. supports the data provided in the Reading.
   C. has nothing to do with the data provided in the Reading.
   D. relates more to the Poem than to the Reading.

3. Our planet is a closed ecological system. This means that there are no new places to exploit. We must handle our waste products here on this planet. Rather than dumping wastes into huge pits, it would be better to

   A. send the wastes in rockets to the moon.
   B. dump them in the ocean instead.
   C. sort and recycle the reusable things.
   D. make everyone dump wastes on their own property.

4. In the Poem, the author claims that one thing is the biggest pollution problem. It is

   A. fire.
   B. nuclear war.
   C. plastic.
   D. ice age.

5. People in poorer countries usually recycle waste products more often than people from richer industrialized countries. One reason is that

   A. they have more education on this subject.
   B. being poor, they throw out fewer items.
   C. their governments have passed stricter laws.
   D. they don't have regular garbage pick up.

6. Which statement best reflects the poet's point of view?

   A. A nuclear war is the greatest threat to the world's future.
   B. Some Canadian communities have started recycling programs.
   C. Plastics are being replaced by reusable products.
   D. The amount of plastic used each year is increasing.

French immersion teachers expressed concern about the availability of French classroom resources for students. In addition, they expressed concern that the Teacher's Guides for the textbooks are not available in French.

The 1977 assessment focused on Grades 4, 8, and 12, therefore, no comparison items were available for Grade 10.

Grade 10 Performance Descriptors

Figure 12
Global Descriptions of Achievement for Grade 10 Students

Percentage Distribution of Students by Levels				
Level	1	2	3	4
Percent	13	36	33	18

Level 1 These students have an awareness of environmental and other global terms and concerns. They can interpret basic political cartoons and graphic aids. They can understand simple cause-and-effect relationships.

Level 2 In addition to the above, these students can understand Canadian political and historical terms and processes. They know basic geographic terms and locations. They can recognize and understand the role of opinion, bias, and point of view in history and in their own decision making. They can select appropriate information from, and identify main issues in, primary and secondary material. They can grasp the basic concepts of democracy. They are able to identify a problem and determine a solution.

Level 3 In addition to the above, these students can clearly identify cause-and-effect relationships. They can link current social issues and institutions with their historical origins. They can understand complex graphic aids, and can interpret and infer from a wide variety of sources. They have knowledge of Canadian and world political systems and processes. They are able to recognize conflicting points of view.

Level 4 In addition to the above, these students are able to correlate complex information to make decisions, draw logical conclusions, and make predictions. They can distinguish between primary and secondary source material. They can recall a wide range of social studies facts and relationships. These students are able to interpret fact, opinion, bias, and abstract concepts. They can apply geography skills to understand human interaction with the environment, use a historical perspective in dealing with current issues, and recognize personal responsibilities in a democracy.

Excerpt from Open-Ended Activities Booklet - Figure 13

Refugees

Read this excerpt from a newsletter; then answer the questions that follow.

WORLD REFUGEES:
CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL ROLE

by Dr. Stanley Knight

It is estimated that there are currently more than 12 million refugees in the world. They are found on every continent and in virtually every country.

Since 1951, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been responsible for the international protection of refugees and for seeking long-term solutions to their problems.

People become refugees through war, civil strife, famine or natural disasters. The UNHCR uses three major strategies with refugees: resettlement back to their country of birth if they so choose; integration into the neighbouring country to which they have fled; or resettlement in another country that has agreed to accept them.

Canada is geographically removed from the major refugee producing areas of the world and has had little impact changing world events that produce refugees. Canada's response to refugees involves three approaches:

1) **Resettlement** — Refugees are screened outside of Canada, brought to Canada (recently at government expense), given some settlement funds, language and vocational training. In 1987, approximately 20,000 refugees were settled under this program.

2) **External aid** — Funds are provided to countries primarily in areas of health, nutrition, educational, and vocational training. Global concerns are most important, as are the needs of women and children who make up three quarters of the world's refugees.

3) **Human Rights advocacy** — Pressure to improve in human rights occurs mainly through diplomatic channels, or through the United Nations. Support is also given to organizations such as the Red Cross, Oxfam, and Amnesty International.

There are four main areas of the world that command Canada's attention: Central America, Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Central America
Various violent military campaigns in Central America have displaced 2 million people over the past 10 years. For example, 300,000 refugees from Guatemala now live in Mexico; 500,000 refugees from El Salvador now live in the United States.

Canada has taken a leading role in offering refugees a Canadian home when it has not been possible to resettle them back into their own countries. Canada has also helped settle refugees into neighbouring countries. Aid has also been given to refugees living in camps in bordering countries. At the diplomatic level Canada has offered to increase financial aid for health and education if human rights violations are decreased and democratic processes restored.

Africa
Half the world's refugees are African, fleeing drought, war, military repression, and apartheid in South Africa. For example, close to 1.5 million refugees have fled Ethiopia to neighbouring countries such as Somalia and Sudan.

Canada has provided millions of dollars in aid. Canada has also led the war of words against human rights violations and apartheid. Few Africans have been resettled in Canada.

Middle East
Over 2 million Palestinians have registered as refugees with the United Nations. Between one and two million people have fled Iran in the past seven years, many seeking refuge in Turkey and Pakistan, hoping for eventual settlement in a western country.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 produced the world's largest single population of refugees. An estimated 3.5 million Afghan refugees now live in Pakistan and 1.5 million in Iran. Canada provides aid to refugees in the many camps, and agricultural and medical programs for refugees living in Pakistan.

Southeast Asia
When the Vietnam war ended in 1975 over 650,000 people left Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Many of these refugees escaped in boats; they were called the "Boat People." About 9,000 settled in Canada. Canada continues to contribute to the anti-piracy programs to protect Vietnamese boat people who still trickle out of Vietnam.

Conclusion
An increasing number of refugees are arriving in Canada. The recent arrival of refugees in boats off our east coast has caused some people to demand tighter refugee laws. These people think Canada's laws are too liberal. Yet others, refugee advocates and experts on international law and world issues, have called Canada's refugee policies arbitrary and discriminatory.

The fear among people who work with refugees is that Canada will be too worried about letting in people who are not really refugees and will pass laws preventing the admission of people who desperately need help. Canada has traditionally always had a commitment to helping genuine refugees.

Despite the present debate, there is popular support for continuing Canada's external aid and human rights advocacy programs. All of Canada's refugee programs are modest, but remind us that we are all responsible for making this world a better place for all people.

(Dr. Stanley Knight was President of the Vancouver Refugee Council and a member of the UNHCR Canadian Task Force at the time of writing. He is currently the Assistant Deputy Chairman of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. The article is adapted from Legal Perspectives, April 1988).

1. What is the main issue dealt with in this article?

_____

_____

2. Summarize, in your own words, one approach mentioned in the article used by Canada to help solve the problems of world refugees.

_____

_____

3. What point of view does the author, Dr. Stanley Knight, hold regarding Canada's response to refugees?

_____

_____

4. The article includes information about the "four critical refugee producing areas in the world". Using the information from the article, complete the chart below. Record the information in the appropriate box.

	Number of Refugees	One Cause of the Problem
Central America		
Africa		
Middle East		
Southeast Asia		

5. Imagine that the Prime Minister of Canada has assigned **you** the task of finding out how Canada can help **one** of the large refugee groups who have recently been left homeless.

   a) List four questions you would want answers to before recommending a course of action.

      i _____
      ii _____
      iii _____
      iv _____

   b) List four sources of information you would use to find answers to questions such as the ones you have listed above. Be as specific as possible.

      i _____
      ii _____
      iii _____
      iv _____

   c) You decide that there are two possible courses of action that Canada could take in regard to this refugee group. List these two options and one positive and one negative result of each option.

Option #1	
One Positive Result	**One Negative Result**

Option #2	
One Positive Result	**One Negative Result**

   d) Now you must choose one of these options to recommend to the Prime Minister. Write a two-paragraph letter to the Prime Minister stating your choice and giving your reasons.

   Use the blank space at the end of this booklet for your rough work.

Grade 10 Open-Ended Activity Results

Grade 10 students were asked to read a passage concerning refugees. They were asked to restate the main issue, to characterize the author's point of view, to analyze possible solutions to the problem, and to write a letter to the Prime Minister outlining their solution.

About 58% of Grade 10 students were able to provide an acceptable restatement of the main issue outlined in the article, and 39% provided a more elaborated statement. However, students had more difficulty describing the author's point of view. About 51% of students provided responses rated as "adequate," and 39% were rated "inadequate." Only 10% of Grade 10 students gave responses that were rated by teachers as "insightful" and/or "well-reasoned."

The scales for the final letter-writing activity are presented in Figure 14. A sample letter at each scale point is presented in Figure 15.

Figure 14
Grade 10 Scales for Letter-Writing Activity

Percentage Distribution of Students by Scale points					
Scale point	0	1	2	3	4
Percent	14	26	26	10	2

Basis of the scale

- originality
- quality of argument
- sense of decision-making - logic
- recognition of consequences
- number of reasons
- elaboration of reasons

Percentage of students not responding: 22

Scale point 0

- unsupported decision, OR completely illogical, illegible, or incomprehensible

Scale point 1

- almost no decision-making process
- reasons/arguments are based on emotions, personal prejudice
- decisions not based on textual information
- illogical or flawed reasoning
- little, minimal, or no elaboration

Scale point 2

- some sense of decision-making process
- recognition of world problem
- selects conclusion without noting the consequences
- may be a flaw in reasoning
- reasons are; general (not specific), not elaborated, unsupported, contradictory, poor quality of detail
- empathy for refugees, personal response
- no evidence of racism or prejudice

Scale point 3

- some sense of decision-making process
- recognition of world problem
- less specific than a "Scale point 4"
- may contain a strong humanitarian and/or moral appeal
- no evidence of racism or prejudice

Scale point 4

- sense of decision-making process conveyed
- options and choices are stated
- recognition of results and consequences
- acknowledgement of positive and negative results
- reasons are elaborated, logical, rational
- argument is international in scope
- sense of Canada's international role/responsibility
- no evidence of racism or prejudice

Top of Scale

Takes a position (which may be a logical compromise) and supports it with logical, thoughtful, elaborated, and structured reasoning. Goes beyond the information presented in the task. (NOTE: It is the quality of the argument rather than the number of reasons that distinguishes these papers.)

Grade 10 Letter-Writing Activity Samples - Figure 15

Dear Sir,

I feel that Canada has a responsibility towards these people.. It should ~~offer~~ them a home and give the financial aid. Nobody will take care of these refugees so we should. It will give us a good reputation.

We should immediately make plans to allow these people into our country. Proper arrangements should be made ASAP.

Sincerely,

GRADE 10 – SCALE POINT 1

Dear Mr. Prime Minister

I think the best way to deal with this problem is to do as we have been doing with the refugees. Find ~~more~~ information about them before letting them come into Canada and then find homes for them with enough money to survive for a few months or until they find a job.

We are made up of refugees and to neglect anyone the chance to enter a better life would not be fair

GRADE 10 – SCALE POINT 2

DEAR BRIAN,

APRÈS AVOIR PRIS BEAUCOUP DE TEMPS SUR LE SUJET, J'AI TROUVÉ QU'EN CE CAS, IL SERA MIEUX D'ENVOYER L'AIDE AUX REFUGIÉS DANS LEUR PAYS.

LE DANGER N'EST PAS SI GRAVE QU'ON A PENSER ET VRAIMENT, M. MULRONY, LE BUDGET, QUI ÉTAIT DONNÉ UN JOUR EN AVANCE N'A PAS ASSEZ DE FONDS POUR RETABLISSER CE GROUPE DE REFUGIÉS. EN PRENNANT EN CONSIDÉRATION TOUT CETTE INFORMATION; J'ESPÈRE QUE TU SUIVERA MON PLAN ET DIRIGE 2 MILLIONS PIASTRES DANS LEUR DIRECTION GENERALE.

GRADE 10 – SCALE POINT 3

Honorable Prime Minister Brian Mulrooney:

Sir, I have proposed an idea regarding the issue of the refugees. I feel it would not only benefit them but also our country to let them come and settle here. It would give them a safe place to live free of war and persecution. It would allow them to start a new life over in our humble country.

I think it would benefit our country in many ways. It would increase business because more employment is needed. They would strengthen our economy. They could also strengthen our army in case of warfare. The refugees would also contribute to our multi-cultural country we have today. They would create a more peaceful feeling here. They would also offer education on their heritage and background. All in all, I feel the bringing of the refugees into our country would do nothing but benefit them and our country in various ways.

Yours sincerely

GRADE 10 – SCALE POINT 4

The Contract Team is concerned that 22% of Grade 10 students did not complete the letter-writing activity, and that a further 40% of letters were coded as "0" or "1." It may be that Grade 10 students did not have enough time to complete the questions. This is assumed to be the case for French program students, where 38% did not write the final letter.

Summary of Achievement

In general, the Interpretation Panels at all three grades expressed relative satisfaction with the achievement of B.C. students in social studies. Many of the recommendations of the Interpretation Panels related to changes in the content emphases of the curriculum. For example, panels at all three grades recommended that current events receive greater attention.

All Interpretation Panels stated their support for the critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving components of the curriculum, and believed that the results reflect the successful use of critical-thinking strategies in classrooms.

The Contract Team, however, while generally satisfied with the results of the assessment, finds that these higher-order activities are not, in fact, very widely used in classrooms. At the secondary level the majority of teachers report that they rely on strategies that are unlikely to challenge students to work at the higher levels of thinking (Goodlad, 1984; Stodolsky, 1988). (See Teaching Social Studies, below.) At the elementary level, more teachers appear to be using strategies to enhance critical thinking among their students. However, even at the elementary level, improvements are needed. For example, when addressing decision-making, elementary teachers focus on the initial and final stages of the process, neglecting the intermediary stages.

Teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels recommended that greater support be provided to assist them to implement the critical thinking components of the curriculum more effectively. Teachers at Grades 4 and 7 recommended that support be provided in the form of pre-service and in-service programs; Grade 10 teachers suggested the support be provided through appropriate instructional resources. The Contract Team suggests that both resources and educational programs are needed for teachers in all grades to ensure effective implementation of the critical-thinking emphasis in the curriculum.

The Grade 7 Panel felt that students' performance on Goal 1 (Canada) could be improved if better resource materials about Canada were available to intermediate teachers.

Grade 10 Interpretation Panel members recommended that the curriculum be revised to include more geography. While the Contract Team acknowledges that the curriculum places more emphasis on history than geography, the Contract Team recommends a greater integration of the social science disciplines (history, geography, law, and economics) in the curriculum.

Grade 10 panel members also indicated that they would like to see a more attention given to the interpretation of charts, graphs, maps, and visuals. They expressed some disappointment with students' performance on questions relating to law, government, and Canada in general. They suggested that a greater emphasis be placed on these areas. The Contract Team supports these recommendations relating to law and government, provided that these topics are addressed from a critical-thinking and community-interaction perspective rather than from an emphasis on the acquisition of facts. The Contract Team believes that sufficient attention to Canada is already given in the curriculum; student performance in this area may relate more to the way this topic is addressed by teachers in the classroom than to the lack of emphasis in the curriculum (see "Teaching Social Studies").

French Immersion Programs

Interpretation Panel ratings for students in regular programs and for those in French Immersion were identical for all domains at the three grades. French Immersion teachers on the Panels were pleased with the results of French Immersion students, especially given the high level of language required both in the prescribed texts and in the assessment materials, particularly in Grades 4 and 7. By Grade 10, regular program students and French Immersion students perform at the same level. The Interpretation Panels concluded that a second language can be acquired through the vehicle of social studies, and that students' achievement in the subject does not suffer as a result.

French Immersion panel members stressed the importance of the development and availability of classroom materials in French, and in particular, the Teacher Guides accompanying the textbooks.

PART 3: ATTITUDES

Goal 4 and the other effective outcomes of the curriculum were assessed by means of four attitude scales developed especially for this assessment. Each attitude scale appeared on one form at all three grades. These attitude scales were as follows:

- Rights (Form R),
- Learning Social Studies (Form R),
- Community Attitudes (Form S), and
- Citizenship Attitudes (Form T).

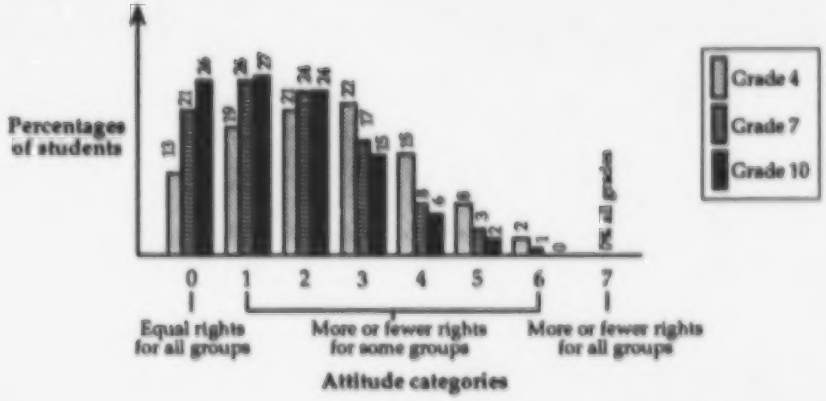
Rights

Respect for the rights of others is a key attitudinal dimension of the social studies curriculum. Rights and responsibilities are addressed as early as Grade 1. In order to measure whether these attitudinal goals are being met, a scale entitled "Rights" was developed, and appeared in Form R for all three grades. Students were asked to decide whether people in each of seven groups should have more, the same, or fewer rights than other people. The seven groups were lawyers, people who have been in prison, people who belong to unions, people on welfare, children and teenagers, immigrants, and people with handicaps.

As expected, this was a slightly more difficult activity for students in Grade 4 than for students in Grades 7 and 10. The non-response rate at Grade 4 was between 9% and 10% for each item, compared with about 7% at Grade 7, and 3% at Grade 10. However, consistencies in the relationships among response patterns across grades suggest that most Grade 4 students understood the activity.

The Rights scale was designed with the assumption that all people should be treated equally, and that preferential treatment for any one group implies discrimination against other groups. Therefore, we considered preferential and discriminatory responses as equivalent in our analysis. The ideal score on this scale, then, is zero; meaning that students believe that all seven groups should have the same rights. A score of seven indicates that a student believes that all seven groups should have "more..." or "fewer rights than everyone else." The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EQUAL RIGHTS



Students' Attitudes towards Equal Rights

The figure clearly shows that students in upper grades are more likely to believe that all people should have equal rights. The data suggest that the greatest growth occurs between Grades 4 and 7.

Further analyses were undertaken to evaluate student responses by individual item. Students in all three grades said that people who had been in prison should have the fewest rights. Fully half of all students who participated in the assessment believe that former prisoners should have fewer rights than everyone else. There was a slight improvement in the attitudes demonstrated by students at higher grades. At Grade 4, 57% of students would restrict the rights of former prisoners, compared with 53% at Grade 7 and 47% at Grade 10.

Compared with the slightly more positive attitudes towards rights for former prisoners evident in older students, attitudes towards immigrants become less positive. In Grade 4, 15% of students believe that immigrants should have fewer rights; this figure grows to 18% in Grade 7. By Grade 10, 26% of students believe that immigrants should have fewer rights than everyone else. Although it is beyond our mandate to analyze these data in terms of regional differences, in order to develop effective programs to promote greater racial and ethnic tolerance, it would be critical for the Ministry of Education to examine the data in this light. For example, it would be invaluable to compare differences in attitudes between students in those school districts which have programs to combat intolerance of racial and ethnic groups, with those students in districts which do not have such programs.

Somewhat surprisingly, many young people believe that children and teenagers should have fewer rights than other people. About 19% of students in Grades 4 and 7 indicate that children and teenagers should have fewer rights, compared with about 16% of Grade 10's.

On the other hand, 27% of students in Grade 4 and 25% of students in Grade 7 think people with handicaps should have more rights than everyone else. Grade 10 is slightly lower, at 21%. The Contract Team finds it difficult to be critical of students on this issue, even though ideally, students would believe that all people should have the same rights. This finding may indicate paternalism towards people with disabilities, and may be a cause for concern. Self-advocacy groups of people with disabilities usually lobby for equal access and treatment.

It is interesting to note that, while belief in equal rights generally increases as students move through the grades, acceptance of the equal rights of immigrants decreases. We find this to be of concern, especially in light of written comments made about immigrants and refugees by Grade 10 students in the written-response booklet. Teachers who were coding letters written by Grade 10 students were alarmed by the substantial proportion of students who wrote comments that teachers considered to be offensive or derogatory. Since this was an unintended finding of the assessment and since these attitudes were not carefully monitored, we recommend that the Ministry undertake (or permit others to undertake) a more detailed analysis of the written responses of Grade 10 students.

Community Attitudes

Goal 4 of the elementary and secondary Curriculum Guides addresses attitudes that should be developed as an outcome of the Grade 1 to 11 program. The Guides state that "students should develop a willingness and ability to use knowledge and understanding as members of society," specifically, that students "participate to the level of their maturity in their society," and "appreciate different points of view."

Twenty questions were developed to assess this goal of the curriculum, ten to measure participation, and ten to measure tolerance. The participation subscale included items which asked students if they would like to vote in elections, if people should try to change a law they do not like, and if every child and adult should play a part in keeping the environment clean. The tolerance subscale included items intended to measure the degree of acceptance of other people's opinions, even when they are different from one's own, and attitudes towards multiculturalism. The attitudes were presented in Likert format, so that students were asked to state how much they agree or disagree with a series of statements.

The following 20 items were presented to students in Form S. Ten items were designed to measure Tolerance and ten to measure Participation.

Students were asked to indicate how much they agree with each statement, using the following scale

- strongly agree
- agree
- not sure
- disagree
- strongly disagree

TOLERANCE

I am interested in other peoples' ideas.

Canada is a more interesting country because there are people from many different countries here.

When people disagree, someone must be wrong.

Other people have the right to an opinion that is different from mine.

Everyone in Canada should learn to speak English.

The law should treat everyone the same.

It does not matter what country people are from; if they are qualified for a job, they should get it.

All people should have the right to hold political office.

People should not have to look after each other; they should look after themselves.

A person who moves to Canada from another country should give up his/her own culture.

PARTICIPATION

Children and teenagers cannot do anything to help their community.

People should say what they think if they do not like what's happening.

It is important to make new students feel welcome.

Every child and adult in Canada should play a part in keeping the environment clean.

So many people vote in an election that it would not matter whether I voted or not.

I enjoy reading the newspaper.

People should avoid problems rather than trying to solve them.

I wish I could vote in government elections.

People should try to change a law they do not like.

Canada should not send food or money to poorer countries.

Overall, the Contract Team was relatively satisfied with the attitudes which B.C. students demonstrated. students on these items. Even Grade 4 students showed relatively positive attitudes on both tolerance and participation, and there was relatively little change across grades. However, there were noticeable differences between males and females in all three grades. Female students in each instance showed more positive attitudes, both in terms of tolerance and participation. Males, on the other hand, showed somewhat less positive attitudes, and were much more varied in their responses.

On the participation subscale, students in all three grades believe that "it is important to make new students feel welcome," and that everyone "should play a part in keeping the environment clean." However, there is an interesting inconsistency in students' attitudes about the law. On the one hand, students in all three grades think that "people should say what they think if they do not like what's happening." Despite this generally shared attitude, a great number of students disagree that "people should try to change a law they do not like." This finding could be interpreted as meaning that students do not understand the role of law in society, or that people should play a part in changing old laws and developing new ones. It also suggests an unwillingness to translate beliefs into action. We recognize that students who participated in the assessment do not have the full rights and responsibilities of adults. However, these results raise a concern about how well students are actually prepared for citizenship. While the curriculum guide advocates "a stronger emphasis on teaching students to apply the knowledge they have gained to the real world," students do not see the need to translate their beliefs into action.

Students in all three grades showed particularly positive attitudes when responding to three items designed to measure tolerance

> Other people have the right to an opinion that's different from mine.
>
> It does not matter what country people are from; if they are qualified for a job, they should get it.
>
> The law should treat everyone the same.

At Grades 4 and 7, the least positive attitudes were noted on this item:

> When people disagree, someone must be wrong.

This item was designed to measure whether students can appreciate that there are multiple points of view on most issues. The results indicate that, while students in the elementary grades show the least tolerance on this item, there is significant and noticeable growth as students proceed through the grades.

> Somewhat negative attitudes were noted in all three grades in response to the item:
>
> Everyone in Canada should learn to speak English.

In writing this item, the Contract Team had hoped that students would recognize the multicultural and bilingual nature of Canadian society. However, in the context of the relatively positive results on the other items in these subscales, the results should be interpreted with caution. One possible interpretation is that children in Western Canada are not particularly sensitive to the bilingual nature of Canada. Similarly, the wording of the item does not necessarily suggest that people must give up their mother tongue.

Citizenship Activity

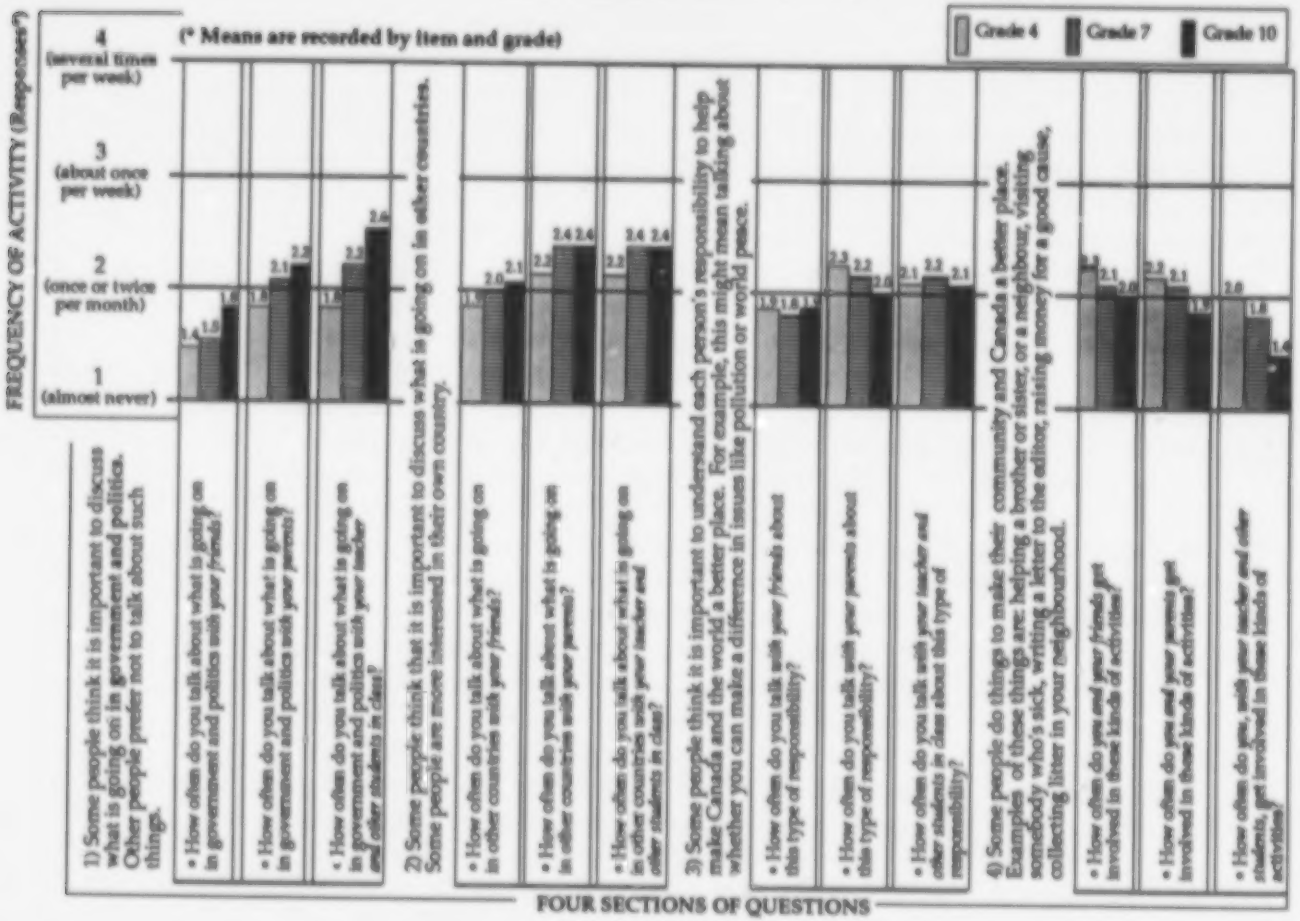
The elementary and secondary Social Studies Curriculum Guides emphasize that the key to learning is the application of knowledge. Concepts and skills, together with the discussion of contemporary issues, culminate in the ability to transfer knowledge to a real-life situation.

In order to assess the extent to which this objective is being practised, students who completed Form T of the assessment booklets were presented with twelve questions organized into four sections. These were

1. discussion of government and political issues,
2. discussion of international issues,
3. discussion of an individual's social responsibility, and
4. participation in activities directed towards community improvement.

For the first nine questions, students were asked to rate how often they talk about these issues with their friends, their parents, and in their classrooms. For the last three questions, students were asked to rate how often they participate in these activities outside the classroom (for example, writing a letter to the editor, raising money for a cause, or helping a neighbour). Results for these questions are summarized in Figure 17. In this table, 4 = several times a week, 3 = about once a week, 2 = about once or twice a month, and 1 = almost never.

Figure 17
STUDENTS' CITIZENSHIP ACTIVITY


FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITY (Responses*)
4 (several times per week)
3 (about once per week)
2 (once or twice per month)
1 (almost never)
(* Means are recorded by item and grade)
Grade 4
Grade 7
Grade 10
1) Some people think it is important to discuss what is going on in government and politics. Other people prefer not to talk about such things.
• How often do you talk about what is going on in government and politics with your friends?
• How often do you talk about what is going on in government and politics with your parents?
• How often do you talk about what is going on in government and politics with your teacher and other students in class?
2) Some people think that it is important to discuss what is going on in other countries. Some people are more interested in their own country.
• How often do you talk about what is going on in other countries with your friends?
• How often do you talk about what is going on in other countries with your parents?
• How often do you talk about what is going on in other countries with your teacher and other students in class?
3) Some people think it is important to understand each person's responsibility to help make Canada and the world a better place. For example, this might mean talking about whether you can make a difference in issues like pollution or world peace.
• How often do you talk with your friends about this type of responsibility?
• How often do you talk with your parents about this type of responsibility?
• How often do you talk with your teacher and other students in class about this type of responsibility?
4) Some people do things to make their community and Canada a better place. Examples of these things are: helping a brother or sister, or a neighbour, visiting somebody who's sick, writing a letter to the editor, raising money for a good cause, collecting litter in your neighbourhood.
• How often do you and your friends get involved in these kinds of activities?
• How often do you and your parents get involved in these kinds of activities?
• How often do you, with your teacher and other students, get involved in these kinds of activities?
FOUR SECTIONS OF QUESTIONS

Students report higher levels of participation in discussions of political and international issues as they progress through the grades. This trend, which holds true for discussions with friends, parents, and classmates and teachers, this may reflect the impact of the increasing attention given to politics and Canadian government in the upper grades.

Despite the increasing amount of participation in discussions about politics and international issues, there is no change in the amount of discussion of "each person's responsibility to help make Canada and the world a better place" as students move from elementary to secondary school. More disturbing is the finding that there are slight but noticeable decreases in the degree of participation reported in activities directed towards community improvement as students progress through school. Some decrease was noted in how often students participate with parents and friends in these types of activities, but the largest decrease was reported in how often these activities are undertaken with the teacher and fellow students.

These results suggest that there is actually less attention given to community-oriented activities at the secondary level, despite what appears to be a greater emphasis in the secondary curriculum guide. Although field studies are explicitly mentioned in the secondary guide, they are placed at the end of the content section, and are grouped with extension activities that the teacher may consider optional. In addition, time-tabling constraints make it more difficult to organize community involvement at the secondary level. Finally, the content of the secondary curriculum, which stresses history, may not be considered conducive to community application. Despite these obstacles, the Contract Team recommends that greater attention be given to this aspect of the curriculum if social studies is to play a key role in the education of young people for active citizenship.

PART 4: TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

Who Teaches Social Studies?

Teachers of social studies bring a great deal of experience to the subject. On average, elementary teachers have taught social studies for 11 years, and secondary teachers for 12 years. While these teachers have, no doubt, gained a great deal of experience by actually delivering the program in classrooms, 30% to 45% of teachers report that they have not attended any in-service program related to the new social studies curriculum. The majority of teachers report that they are willing to participate in in-service, particularly in new areas such as problem-solving, decision-making, and use of computers in social studies.

In the absence of such in-service programs, teachers must rely on their own classroom experience and the limited university courses they have taken in the past. The average elementary teacher has completed one university level course in each of history, geography, sociology, and social studies methods. The average Grade 10 teacher has completed two university courses in both history and geography, and one course in each of sociology, political science, economics, and social studies methods. While this pattern of course preparation may appear substantial, the contract team judges that, given the salience of social studies in the curriculum, the pattern suggests an inadequate academic background in the disciplines comprising social studies.

Teachers are not deriving the benefit of belonging to professional associations in social studies. Only 4% of Grade 4 teachers and 11% of Grade 7 teachers belong to the British Columbia Social Studies Teachers' Association. Only 37% of secondary social studies teachers are members, even though the current activities of the association focus primarily on this level. Most social studies teachers, then, may not have the benefits of professional journals, conferences, and other professional development activities that could enhance instruction. This is an area of need which should be addressed by the provincial specialists' association.

Curriculum Guides/Resource Manuals

The goals, objectives, and content of the social studies curriculum for Grades 1 to 11 are expressed in two curriculum guides, one for elementary programs and the other for secondary programs. The elementary guide is accompanied by the *Social Studies Resources Manual, Grades 1-3 (1983)* and the *Social Studies Resources Manual, Grades 4-7 (1986)*. There is no resource manual for the secondary level.

Although the curriculum guides are intended to provide direction to teachers concerning what to teach, teachers report that they refer to the guide, on average, only twice a year. About two-thirds of elementary and secondary teachers report that they find the guide only "somewhat useful" in "communicating the goals and objectives of the social studies program." There is a danger, then, that the content and delivery of the curriculum will be driven by specific textbooks which may not reflect all of the dimensions of the curriculum.

Three-quarters of primary and intermediate teachers who know about the resource manuals find them somewhat useful in their teaching. However, one-quarter of Grade 4 teachers and one-fifth of Grade 7 teachers are not aware of the resource manuals or have not seen them. Since the resource manuals were prepared to assist teachers, it is surprising that there has not been more effective distribution of these materials.

A further problem is the lack of integration of the elementary and secondary curriculum guides. Despite the fact that the curriculum is intended to be integrated and cumulative from Grade 1 to 11, 60% of Grade 4 teachers, 58% of Grade 7 teachers, and 52% of Grade 10 teachers are "not familiar enough with the other guide to have an opinion" about the coordination between the elementary and secondary programs. There may be some diffusion of responsibility in this regard; perhaps teachers assume that, if they follow the guide for their level, their students will be prepared for what is to follow. However, it is not a desirable situation that three out of five Grade 7 teachers, for example, do not really know how well they are preparing their students for secondary social studies.

The Contract Team also notes that the curriculum guides for elementary and secondary social studies are structured differently. The secondary guide describes the content of the curriculum in great detail. However, its organization, unlike that of the primary guide, de-emphasizes the skills and processes of learning. This is a further impediment to the effective implementation of classroom strategies that foster critical thinking at the secondary level. Secondary teachers feel compelled to convey a highly detailed body of content, and therefore view satisfactory student outcomes in terms of detailed knowledge, at the expense of the development of critical thinking. No doubt this problem is exacerbated by the existence of district-wide and provincial examinations that are perceived to place a greater emphasis on content than on process.

Curriculum Content

The current B.C. Social Studies Curriculum Guides were designed to integrate skills, content, and attitudes.

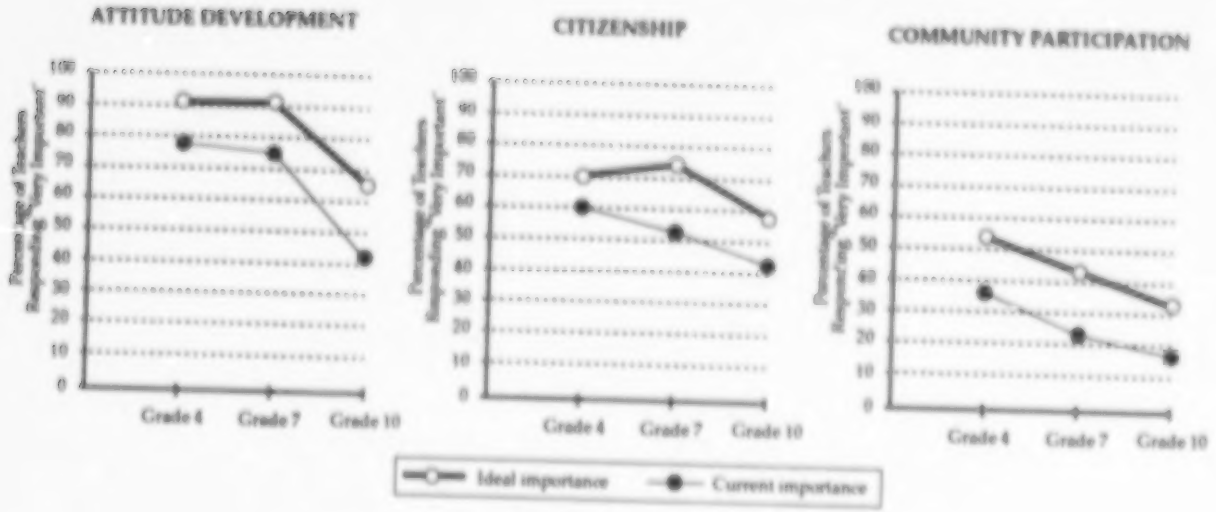
Teachers were asked to indicate how much emphasis they believe is given to a number of skills in the current B.C. curriculum guides, and how much emphasis should be given to these skills. Problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, and inquiry are stressed throughout the grades. With the programs called for in *Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future* (Ministry of Education, 1989), this emphasis will be extended well beyond social studies. Over 80% of Grade 4 and 7 teachers think that these cognitive processes are adequately addressed in the current guides. This figure drops by 25% at the secondary level, where, for example, 55% of Grade 10 teachers believe these areas are adequately addressed in the secondary curriculum guide. Over 80% of teachers in all three grades, however, believe that the stress on higher-order thinking is important.

Teachers were also asked to indicate which content areas they believe are important in the current social studies curriculum, and which areas need greater emphasis. Responses were remarkably similar across all three grades. Global awareness, environmental studies, and current events are the three major content areas that teachers believe should be given more prominence in the curriculum. In addition, many Grade 7 teachers believe that greater attention should be given to Canadian studies. Many Grade 10 teachers want more emphasis on geography and less on history.

When the curriculum is revised, new content areas should not simply be added to existing content. Overall, teachers at all three grades expressed the belief that there is already too much content to cover in the social studies curriculum, and that the scope is too broad for the amount of time allocated for the course. This perspective is supported by a recent position paper of the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools (The Commission, 1989; Jenness, 1990), which argues for "carefully articulated in-depth studies," rather than "redundant, superficial studies."

Attitudinal development, stressed in Goal 4 of the curriculum guide, is embedded in the scope and sequence for each grade. Teachers were asked to indicate the current and ideal importance of attitude development, community participation, and citizenship in the social studies curriculum. Results for this series of questions are presented in Figure 18.

Figure 18
TEACHERS' RATINGS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF AFFECTIVE OUTCOMES



Teachers' Ratings of the Importance of Affective Outcomes

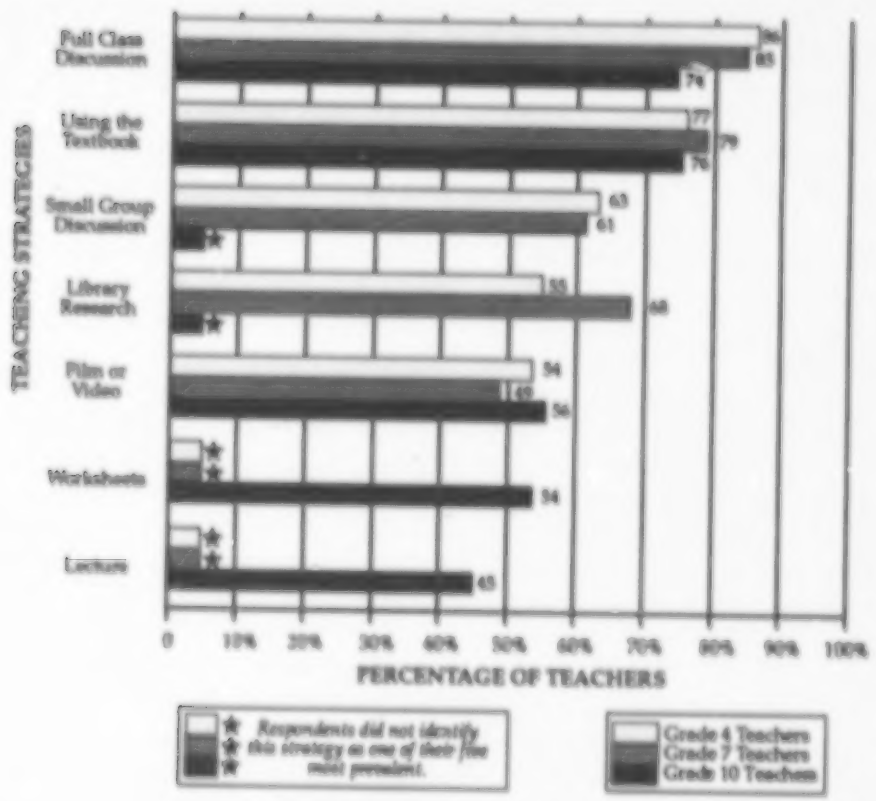
As in the content and skills areas, teachers in Grades 4 and 7 hold similar views, while Grade 10 teachers are less firmly committed to ensuring that these attitudes are conveyed as part of the curriculum. Again, it is reasonable to hypothesize that secondary teachers view development of attitudes as less important than learning content. There are some similarities, however, among the three grades. Many teachers in all three grades believe that attitude development, community participation, and citizenship should receive greater attention than is currently reflected in the curriculum. Of the three areas in question, attitude development is considered to be the most important, with citizenship second, and community participation third.

In light of the results on the Tolerance scale, the Rights scale, the negative comments about recent immigrants in the written-response booklet, and the results on the Citizenship Activity scale, the Contract Team believes that there should be an increased emphasis on attitude development as part of the social studies curriculum, particularly at the secondary level.

Teaching Strategies

Teachers were asked a number of questions about the methods they use to teach social studies. The five most common strategies used in the three grades are presented in Figure 19.

Figure 19
FIVE MOST PREVALENT TEACHING STRATEGIES
(Percentage of Teachers)



Most Prevalent Teaching Strategies

Teachers at Grades 4 and 7 report using very similar teaching methods. More than four out of five teachers use full class discussion as their most common approach. This is followed by using the textbook, small group work, library research, and films and videos. Teachers report that they rarely use more innovative strategies, such as simulation, role-play, field studies, or computer programs.

Similarly, the most commonly used classroom strategies in Grade 10 encourage passivity on the part of secondary students. Teachers most often rely on the textbook as the basis for classroom activity. Textbook use is followed by full class discussion, films and videos, work sheets, and lectures. These activities are teacher directed and dominated. It is difficult to imagine how critical thinking can be cultivated in this environment.

Teachers were asked to rate how much students learn from their teaching methods. Teachers report that they believe the methods they currently use are the most effective. To determine the accuracy of this belief, we correlated students' achievement results with their reports of how often their teachers use each of these classroom strategies (Figure 19). At all three grades, it was found that use of worksheets and copying notes from the board are significantly related to achievement – but in a negative direction. This finding indicates that the more often students work on worksheets and copy notes from the board, the lower their level of achievement. On the other hand, students who reported that their teachers talk about topics in social studies, and that they are encouraged to explain their ideas through discussion, performed at higher levels on the achievement surveys.

Teachers currently believe that the methods they are using are the most effective, therefore, in-service programs for teachers should include recent research findings (Dreeben and Barr, 1988; Goodlad, 1984) that indicate

that other teaching methods appear to be more conducive to learning. Stodolsky (1988), for example, found that higher-order thinking occurs more often when students are working in groups. Stodolsky writes:

> If complexity and challenge go hand in hand, children can expect the least challenge when under teacher direction..., variety and middle level challenges when working on their own..., and the highest levels of cognitive challenge when working with one another in social studies (Stodolsky, p. 82).

Current research in education shows that children's learning is maximized if they are challenged intellectually. Critical thinking could be enhanced if teachers were supported in their efforts to use more innovative and challenging classroom strategies.

Grade 4 teachers place great value on innovative methods, although they do not use them extensively. In addition to the methods they already use, Grade 4 teachers also believe that children learn from role-play, simulations and games, field studies, and guest speakers. Teachers in Grade 4 need additional in-service support to encourage their use of these more innovative methods.

Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency and ease with which they integrate social studies with other curriculum areas. Grade 4 and 7 teachers report that they integrate social studies somewhat more often than Grade 10 teachers. Elementary teachers state that they find it easier to integrate social studies with other curriculum areas than do secondary teachers. The problems of integrating social studies with other disciplines at the secondary level are, no doubt, exacerbated by the organization of secondary schools. If successful integration is going to occur, as mandated by the *Year 2000* report, these structural issues will need to be addressed.

Teachers were asked, in an open-ended question, to outline the problems they face in attempting to integrate social studies with other curriculum areas. Teachers at all three grades indicated three major problems they must overcome when trying to integrate social studies with other curriculum areas:

1. lack of time (preparation time, and time to communicate with colleagues),
2. lack of knowledge, and
3. administrative difficulties (for example, problems with student and staff scheduling, rotating blocks).

For curriculum integration to be successful, teachers must be provided with the time and resources to plan and implement. Teachers can establish effective links among disciplines if given the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with one another. The Ministry of Education and school districts could foster this collaboration through establishing and encouraging peer coaching programs for teachers.

Teachers were also asked, in an open-ended question, to describe the classroom strategies they use to foster critical thinking. The four most commonly cited strategies in all three grades were these:

1. small-group/full-class discussion;
2. asking questions, using Bloom's Taxonomy, or other questioning techniques;
3. individual written projects (for example, essays, reports on library research); and
4. problem-solving and decision-making activities.

Like the other strategies teachers reported, the first three of these methods represent a narrow range of classroom activities. Some teachers reported using strategies that involve students as agents in their own learning, such as simulations and role-play, or "whole language" techniques.

While the Contract Team is concerned about these findings, they do reflect the general state of classroom practices in other jurisdictions (see, for example, Goodlad, 1984). Because these practices are so engrained in social studies classrooms, a concerted effort will be required to encourage and assist teachers to move in a new direction.

Students' Perceptions of Classroom Strategies

Students were asked to describe the activities they engage in during their social studies classes. Students were asked to rate how often each one of a number of strategies was used in their classroom. Results for these questions are presented in Figure 20. In this figure, 4 = usually, 3 = often, 2 = sometimes, and 1 = never.

Figure 20
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Means* (and Standard Deviations)

	GRADE 4	GRADE 7	GRADE 10
Working in small groups	2.1 (0.8)	2.2 (0.8)	2.1 (0.8)
Receiving encouragement to express ideas	3.0 (0.9)	3.1 (0.9)	3.0 (0.9)
Watching a film, video or slide show	2.1 (0.7)	2.2 (0.7)	2.3 (0.7)
Doing worksheets	2.6 (1.0)	2.5 (0.9)	2.7 (0.9)
Seeking information outside of the school	1.6 (0.7)	1.5 (0.8)	1.4 (0.7)
Copying notes from the board	2.3 (1.0)	2.5 (1.0)	2.7 (1.0)
Participating in games, drama or role play	1.7 (0.8)	1.5 (0.7)	1.5 (0.7)
Having ideas and suggestions accepted	2.5 (0.9)	2.5 (0.9)	2.1 (0.9)
Doing a library research project	2.1 (0.9)	2.6 (0.9)	2.1 (0.8)
Going on a field trip	1.7 (0.7)	1.3 (0.6)	1.2 (0.5)
Having a guest speaker	1.5 (0.6)	1.3 (0.5)	1.3 (0.5)
Listening to the teacher talk	3.1 (0.9)	3.3 (0.8)	3.4 (0.8)
Using the textbook (*Grade 10 only*)			3.4 (0.8)

* *4 = usually, 3 = often, 2 = sometimes, 1 = never*

The results of this series of questions confirm the reports from teachers themselves, and indicate that traditional teaching strategies predominate in social studies classrooms. These methods include listening to the teacher, using the textbook, copying notes from the board, and being encouraged to express ideas during discussions. More innovative strategies such as field investigations, games, role-plays, and simulations, and group work are used least often. These trends are particularly pronounced at the secondary level. Students report that the frequency of copying notes and listening to the teacher talk increases across the grades, while the frequency of field studies and small group work decreases.

Students' Attitudes about Classroom Strategies

The B.C. Social Studies curriculum guides identify a number of skills that should be addressed through a variety of instructional strategies. For example, students should be able to "gather facts from field studies and interviews" and learn "group and discussion skills." In order to assess students' opinions about these strategies, students were asked to rate six selected strategies in three different ways according to the following instructions:

A. Tell how important you think it is.
B. Tell how easy it is for you.
C. Tell how much you enjoy it.

The six strategies students rated in this way were the following:

- working in small groups
- doing worksheets
- taking part in games, drama, or role-play
- doing a research project using the library
- going on a field trip
- using the textbook.

The results across the three grades were remarkably similar, with students consistently rating the same strategies in similar ways.

Results are presented in Figure 21. On the "importance scale," 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important; on the "easy" scale, 1 = very easy and 5 = very difficult; and on the "enjoyment scale," 1 = not at all enjoyable and 5 = very enjoyable.

Figure 21
LEARNING SOCIAL STUDIES

		Means* (and Standard Deviations)		
		Important	Easy	Enjoyable
Working in small groups	GRADE 4	3.8 (0.9)	2.2 (0.9)	4.0 (0.9)
	GRADE 7	3.7 (0.8)	2.2 (0.8)	4.0 (0.8)
	GRADE 10	3.7 (0.9)	2.2 (0.8)	3.9 (0.8)
Doing worksheets	GRADE 4	4.1 (0.9)	2.4 (1.0)	3.5 (1.1)
	GRADE 7	3.7 (0.9)	2.5 (0.9)	2.8 (1.0)
	GRADE 10	3.6 (0.9)	2.5 (0.9)	2.7 (1.0)
Games, drama or role-play	GRADE 4	3.7 (1.1)	2.3 (1.1)	4.2 (0.9)
	GRADE 7	3.6 (1.1)	2.3 (1.0)	4.1 (1.0)
	GRADE 10	3.3 (1.2)	2.4 (1.0)	3.8 (1.1)
Library research projects	GRADE 4	4.2 (0.8)	2.8 (1.1)	3.7 (1.0)
	GRADE 7	4.3 (0.8)	2.8 (1.0)	3.4 (1.0)
	GRADE 10	4.1 (0.8)	2.9 (1.0)	3.2 (1.1)
Field trips	GRADE 4	4.1 (0.9)	1.6 (0.8)	4.7 (0.7)
	GRADE 7	4.0 (0.9)	1.6 (0.8)	4.6 (0.7)
	GRADE 10	4.0 (1.0)	1.6 (0.8)	4.5 (0.7)
Using the textbook	GRADE 4	4.3 (0.8)	2.2 (1.0)	3.5 (1.1)
	GRADE 7	4.2 (0.8)	2.5 (0.9)	3.0 (1.0)
	GRADE 10	4.1 (0.9)	2.6 (1.0)	2.7 (1.0)

* *IMPORTANT SCALE: 1 = not at all important; 5 = very important*
* *EASY SCALE: 1 = very easy; 5 = very difficult*
* *ENJOYMENT SCALE: 1 = not at all enjoyable; 5 = very enjoyable*

Students in all three grades perceive using their textbook and doing research projects as the two most important activities. On the other hand, students believe that group work, games, drama, and role-play are the least important classroom activities. Students rate field trips as the easiest activity, and research projects as the most difficult.

Students at all three grades rated worksheets as the least enjoyable activity, and older students dislike them even more than younger ones. Younger students like role-play, drama, and games; but this decreases, particularly at Grade 10. Using their textbook was rated as a relatively unenjoyable activity by all students, especially by students in Grades 7 and 10. This decline in interest across the three grades may be due to the content of the prescribed textbooks at each level. The nature and quality of the Teacher's Guides for the Grade 4 textbooks may enable teachers to use these textbooks in more interesting and creative ways.

The contract team finds it interesting that students do not equate difficulty with lack of enjoyment. The most important example of this finding is that students do not consider textbooks enjoyable, even though they find them easy. This finding is in keeping with other current research (Stodolsky, 1988).

Students in all three grades see research projects as difficult, but important. This attitude could stem from teachers not adequately preparing students to carry out library-based or field research.

Textbooks

In Grade 4, teachers have a choice between two textbook series, one published by Douglas and McIntyre, *The Haida and the Inuit, People of the Seasons*, the other by Prentice-Hall, *Native People and Explorers of Canada*. Overall, Grade 4 teachers were relatively satisfied with both of these series, although the Douglas and McIntyre series was rated more favourably than the Prentice-Hall series. Grade 4 teachers want more information about resources and evaluation strategies in the teacher's guides for both series; the Prentice-Hall guide was viewed as particularly weak in this area.

At Grade 7, the prescribed textbook is *Other Places, Other Times*. At Grade 10, the prescribed textbook is *Our Land: Building the West* . Both are published by Canada Publishing. Overall, teachers in Grades 7 and 10 were not enthusiastic about these prescribed textbooks for their grades. The student textbooks, however, were rated slightly higher than the accompanying teacher's guides. While teachers at both Grades 7 and 10 believe that there is a fairly good match between the textbooks and the curriculum, the quality of the maps and questions needs improvement. Grade 10 teachers (and to a slightly lesser extent, Grade 7 teachers) want more information about resources, as well as instructional and evaluation strategies in the teacher's guide.

Evaluation

Teachers were asked to indicate the importance they place on a number of methods for evaluating student achievement in social studies. Results are presented in Figure 22; in this Figure, 2 = very important, 1 = important, and 0 = not important.

Figure 22
MEAN TEACHER RATINGS* OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION STRATEGIES

	GRADE 4	GRADE 7	GRADE 10
Anecdotal records	1.6	1.5	1.5
Individual research projects	1.6	1.7	1.6
Group projects	1.5	1.5	1.1
Oral presentations	1.5	1.5	1.2
Teacher-made tests	1.4	1.6	1.8
Student-teacher conferences	1.4	1.3	1.0
Student self-evaluation	1.1	1.1	0.7
Peer evaluation	0.8	0.9	0.6
Standardized tests	0.5	0.6	0.7

* *2 = very important; 1 = important; 0 = not important*

Mean Teacher Ratings of the Importance of Evaluation Strategies

At Grade 4, various strategies are used, including individual research projects, anecdotal records, group projects, and oral presentations. These represent a wide range of evaluation strategies. The only additional strategies that might be used more effectively by Grade 4 teachers are self-evaluation and peer evaluation.

Grade 7 teachers report that they use almost the same evaluation strategies as those used by Grade 4 teachers. There is still a range of strategies used, but Grade 7 teachers place more emphasis on teacher-made tests and less emphasis on student-teacher conferences and anecdotal records.

At Grade 10, teachers rely on a narrower range of evaluation strategies. Teacher-made tests and individual research projects are the major source of information for determining students' grades. As students progress through the grades, they experience a real decline in the frequency of teacher-student conferences, group projects, and oral presentations.

Teachers were asked, in an open-ended question, to indicate the methods they use to evaluate critical thinking. The most common response was the use of informal evaluation methods, that is, their own professional judgement based on impressions acquired during full-class or small-group discussions. A second way that teachers evaluate critical thinking is through students' written work, including reports, examinations, and research projects. Teachers in higher grades increasingly rely on students' written work for evaluation. The Contract Team concludes that in-service programs concerning critical thinking should include information about alternate ways of evaluating critical thinking.

PART 5: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the 1989 Social Studies Assessment lead us to conclude that many teachers would welcome shifts in content emphasis within the curriculum, for example, increased attention to global awareness, current events, and environmental studies at all grades. Substantive revision to the content of the curriculum is not called for at this time. Other changes, however, are necessary to enhance the implementation of the curriculum. In particular, the curriculum guides need extensive clarification, and content needs to be integrated with skills and attitudes. Rather than focusing energy on redeveloping the curriculum, energy needs to be devoted to the effective implementation of the curriculum in every school district in the province.

The Contract Team is particularly concerned about two areas needing more effective implementation: first, the critical-thinking aspects of the curriculum (especially at the secondary level), and second, attitude development. If these are to remain integral components of the curriculum, then teachers must be provided with the support necessary to implement them. This support should include extensive in-service activities, provision of appropriate classroom materials, and release time to facilitate collaboration among teachers at the local school level. These recommendations are especially critical in light of the Ministry's planned *Year 2000* curriculum.

As originally conceived, social studies was designed as the pivotal discipline for citizenship education. This sense of mission is embodied in the current curriculum. What remains to be accomplished is to narrow the gap between the curriculum and classroom practice.

APPENDIX: PROCEDURES

The 1989 British Columbia Social Studies Assessment was designed to evaluate the extent to which students demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the social studies curriculum.

The Ministry of Education awarded the contract for the 1989 B.C. Social Studies Assessment to a team of educators/researchers from the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. The Contract Team developed the Tables of Specifications for the assessment, which served as the "blueprint" for the design of the assessment instruments (multiple-choice and written-response achievement surveys, attitude scales, background information questions, and teacher questionnaires).

An Advisory Committee, comprised of teachers, Ministry personnel, and university professors, was appointed by the Learning Assessment Branch of the Ministry of Education to provide advice regarding the development of the Tables of Specifications and the instruments used in the assessment.

Review Panels, comprised of teachers, reviewed all instruments developed for the assessment. Four Interpretation Panels were convened to develop the descriptors of achievement results, and to evaluate the achievement results by domain.

The assessment was designed to examine the following specific issues:

1. To what extent are students in British Columbia achieving selected goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum (primary, intermediate, and junior secondary)?

2. What changes in levels of achievement have occurred at the provincial level since the 1977 assessment?

3. What changes in student attitudes have occurred since the 1977 assessment?

4. What relationships exist between student attitudes and achievement?

5. How does the Social Studies achievement of British Columbia students compare with achievement in other jurisdictions where objectives are similar?

6. What relationships exist between classroom practices and Social Studies achievement?

7. What opinions do teachers hold about the Social Studies program?

8. What recommendations are suggested by the assessment?

In developing the Tables, all components of the curriculum (introductory statements, philosophy and rationale, program goals and learning outcomes, grade level content, and skills) were carefully evaluated by the Contract Team, with extensive consultation with practising teachers and the Advisory Committee. The goal of this stage of the assessment was to reach a consensus about the fundamental underpinnings of the curriculum.

Comparison of the achievement levels of British Columbia students with achievement in other jurisdictions was more difficult than expected. Social Studies curricula from across Canada were examined to ascertain similarities and differences among curricular content. Although many provinces have curricula which bear a relationship to the curriculum in British Columbia, no suitable achievement items could be located which provided province-wide data to enable a comparison with the results in British Columbia.

Typically in the Provincial Learning Assessment Program, all students in three grades are selected to take part in each assessment. For the 1989 Social Studies Assessment, all students in Grades 4, 7, and 10 took part. However, the assessment does not address only the content of only those grades. Rather, students took part in the assessment as a representative sample of students in the primary, intermediate and secondary programs. Therefore, instrument design was intended to represent the cumulative outcomes of the curriculum up to and including the grade at which the assessment was carried out. For example, Grade 4 students completed instruments that reflect the goals of the curriculum from Grades 1 through 4.

All results presented in this report are based on four forms which were developed and administered at each grade level: Forms Q, R, S, and T. All B.C. students in Grades 4, 7, and 10 completed a multiple-choice booklet (one of Forms R, S, or T) designed for their grade. Forms R, S, and T were designed so that students could record their answers on optically-scannable sheets. Each multiple-choice booklet included 40 multiple-choice achievement items, one or two attitude scales, and background information questions. Booklets were distributed to schools in such a way that all three booklets (Forms R, S, and T) were administered in approximately equal numbers in each classroom.

Students in a randomly selected 8% sample of classrooms representing each of the three grades also completed a written-response form (Form Q). Students receiving Form Q booklets also completed background information questions and an attitude scale.

Students in Program-cadre de français and French immersion programs answered the items in French; the French booklets were translations of the English booklets.

Experienced social studies teachers, district administrators, and Ministry of Education personnel were brought together in a series of meetings to assist the Contract Team to interpret the provincial results of the achievement surveys. At subsequent meetings, panel members developed the performance descriptors.

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